

Fairfax Center Area Study – Phase I
Springfield District Working Group
Meeting Summary
Wednesday, October 29, 2014

The meeting began with introductions of members and community representatives. The following working group members were present: Jeff Saxe (Chairman), Gail Brugger, Robbie Stark, Philip Poole, Tony Wiley, Susan Yantis, and Tom McDonald. Karan Shaffer was absent. Also joining the working group were a number of community representatives from the surrounding communities, including Willowmeade, Hampton Woods I, Hampton Woods II and Hampton Forest.

Staff present included Marlae Schnare from Supervisor Herrity's Office; Springfield District Planning Commissioner/Chairman Pete Murphy; Meghan Van Dam, Kimberly Rybold and Tom Merce from the Department of Planning and Zoning; and Arpita Chatterjee from the Department of Transportation.

The Chairman, Jeff Saxe, provided attendees with a brief summary of the working group process until this point, and explained the purpose of the meeting to allow for the working group to review some of the community's comments and concerns. Potentially, the working group could reconsider its recommendations outlined in the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment Staff Report, dated September 4, 2014. A compilation of comments received by the supervisor's office and the Fairfax Center email address was distributed to attendees.

Community representatives from the neighborhoods impacted by potential planned land use changes in Sub-Units M2 and S1 attended the meeting to voice their concerns. Discussion included the following:

- The community representatives were very concerned about the impact of additional residential density on the local schools, primarily Willow Springs Elementary School. They stated that they are worried about the present condition of the school and not satisfied with the fact that the Comprehensive Plan does not directly address resolving schools and school overcrowding issues in the future.
 - One community representative stated that according to Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Willow Springs Elementary School is 69 students overcapacity today and will be 105 students overcapacity in six years. It was further stated that Eagle View Elementary School would be 118% overcapacity by the 2018-2019 school year.
 - A community representative stated that there is a need for a new elementary school in the near future to solve the overcrowding problem and that additional residential development, especially south of Lee Highway, does not make any sense. She stated that the Occoquan Watershed should be kept low density residential in order to preserve the water quality.

- A community representative said that the county agencies need to stop doing stove piped planning and should do a better job communicating the impacts of land use changes on the local community. Schools planning should be integrated into comprehensive planning. Kimberly Rybold and Meghan Van Dam explained that this can be difficult, as the Comprehensive Plan is a long-term vision (20+ years) and FCPS planning horizons are much shorter.
- A community representative said that the FCPS analyses of school impact from redevelopment is often inaccurate and needs to be adjusted. They cited a recent FCPS demographer estimate that a complex across from Wegmans, adjacent to Lee Highway, would generate only one additional student. Instead, the project generated 100 additional students that drive past a closer school to attend Willow Springs and this has led to overcrowding. Additionally, there is not enough parking at the school.
- Tony Wiley said that the issue of school overcrowding, while a valid concern, is not a land use issue that can be addressed in this process. It was recommended that the community needs to be sharing school concerns with the School Board, particularly with regard to the specific apartment complex in question.
- Tony Wiley asked about the density incentives and why the working group decided to add them to the Plan recommendations. Jeff Saxe explained the Comprehensive Plan language from its current 1-2 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) to 3-4 du/ac originated from the objective of incentivizing commercially-zoned parcels to redevelop with uses more compatible with surrounding residential development. This is consistent with adopted Plan guidance for the Lee Highway corridor.
 - The community representatives said they are concerned about this increased density and it not being compatible with the existing lower density residential development. There is not an issue with the existing commercial uses. Jeff Saxe noted that these uses may not be there forever, and Susan Yantis noted that the working group was focused on the long-term use of these properties.
 - A community representative said that any new development adjacent to Tractor Lane should not connect to Hampton Woods via the existing temporary cul-de-sac. Working group members noted that any connecting road between Tractor Lane and Lee Highway was a separate issue, and agreed that it should not be specifically addressed in the working group's recommendation. They indicated that any decision on such a connection should be made when future development plans are reviewed and the impact on transportation, public safety and surrounding neighborhoods (Hampton Woods, Hampton Forest and Summit Drive) can be fully addressed.
 - Another community representative noted they didn't think incentivizing redevelopment of C-8 properties has worked in the corridor.

- Jeff Saxe asked the group how people felt about parcels 30 and 31, the site of the Pleasant Acres Motel.
 - The agent for the owners of the Pleasant Acres Motel said there is the potential for the site to be redeveloped as an assisted living facility. The existing use is nonconforming, and there has not been much interest in developing under the current Plan recommendations. The current proposal, as stated in their comment letter to the working group, is a two-story, assisted living/memory care facility. It was stated that this use, unlike single family residential, would have no impact on the schools and minimal impact on traffic.
 - A community representative noted that this area already has many institutional uses such as the shelter and girls probation home.
 - Pete Murphy noted that there is a need for additional senior housing within the county.
 - A community representative said that consideration of an assisted living facility is not the focus of this Plan Amendment, but rather the consideration of additional residential development density. The existing language should be retained and the language to connect Tractor and Crouch lanes to any new development should be removed. These potential connections could be considered during the rezoning process.

Following the open discussion, the working group discussed the specific recommendations for each of the sub-units as expressed in the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment staff report, dated September 4, 2014. They began with Sub-Unit M2.

- Tony Wiley suggested removing the language that states "Access should be provided on via Willowmeade Drive" (page 42 of 65). He believed the Plan language should not dictate access points for future redevelopment as it would be unnecessarily restrictive.
- Tom McDonald asked about service drives, and if these would be needed once Lee Highway is widened. Arpita Chatterjee indicated that there are no plans presently to add service drives along this portion of the Lee Highway corridor.
- Tony Wiley and Phil Poole recommended changing the language in the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment staff report (page 41 of 65) that supports an option of up to 3 du/ac for Sub-unit M2, citing that 3 du/ac may be inconsistent with the character of the existing 1 du/ac neighborhood. A motion was made to change the working group recommendation back to the 1-2 du/ac level that is found in the existing Comprehensive Plan. Members further discussed that the specific language to encourage parcel consolidation for future redevelopment should be added to the existing Plan language.
- It was noted that without a change in density, this would actually make the existing Plan recommendations more difficult to implement.

- The motion to retain the adopted Comprehensive Plan recommendation for this area was unanimously approved by the working group.

Next, the working group discussed Sub-Unit S1.

- Phil Poole motioned that recommendation to support an option of up to 3 du/ac be changed to reflect 1-2 du/ac density currently in the Comprehensive Plan. The motion was not seconded.
- Jeff Saxe suggested that the current working group recommendation for this area of 3 du/ac is still appropriate, and offered a motion to retain language in the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment staff report (pages 43-44 of 65) supporting an option of up to 3 du/ac. The motion supported removing the language, "...via Tractor Lane" so as not to unduly restrict future redevelopment plans, citing the same reasoning as used to remove reference to Willowmeade Drive in Sub-unit M2. The motion passed, 5-1.